

## FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to the field of computerized gift registries and, more particularly, to a registry system for the use of florists and similar merchants providing a capability of filling gift orders over time.

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## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 A bride-to-be often registers at various merchants to express her preferences in certain items she would like to receive as gifts for her wedding. For example, she may register with a merchant who specializes in dinner ware and the like, and selects a particular style and pattern of dinnerware, and also selects specific items in that style and pattern. The merchant keeps track as items are purchased for the registered bride, preferably on a computer system, so that only a predetermined number of each item selected by the bride is purchased. Often, the bride registers at more than one merchant, and the merchants typically tie their tracking system together for the convenience of the bride and the purchasers so that the same item is not purchased at two different stores. Or one particular merchant may have more than one location, and the purchase of an item at one location is reflected in the records of all locations.

15 Then, wedding guests wishing to buy a gift for the bride find out where the bride is registered and go to that merchant to select a gift for the bride. As each item is purchased, the purchase is noted and that way the bride receives no more than what she has selected.

20 Such a system would be very helpful in other situations as well. For example, when someone is hospitalized, then his or her family can register with a florist or other gift merchant, expressing particular preferences in what the patient would appreciate receiving. Such a system could then be helpful in other ways. For example, if a patient is registered with a florist, or with a service which ties a plurality of such merchants together, then the flowers or other gifts could be delivered over a period of time, and not

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all on the same day.

The present invention addresses this need in the art.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5           The present invention provides a coordinated system whereby a subscriber or registrant may register with a specific merchant or a service which ties a plurality of merchants together. Preferences with the merchant or system are expressed and recorded in the system. Then, as items filling those preferences are purchased, a record is maintained of such purchases, and the orders are filled over a preselected period of time or at some specified later date. Also, the system is capable of recalling that a purchase has been made and filled, but provides the capability of restoring that item to the registry if desired.

10           Such a system is particularly adapted to a florist system and the like. In order to avoid a large quantity of goods such as flowers being delivered all at one time, the system maintains a timing record whereby ordered goods are delivered over a predetermined period of time. Cut flowers and the like are particularly perishable, so the timed delivery of the perishable goods ensures that fresh flowers are available over a longer period of time. For example, many people enjoy giving flowers to newlyweds, and the system provides the capability of delivering some flowers to the newlyweds before their honeymoon and some to them after they return.

15           The system is also adapted to other situations where the timing of the delivery of perishable goods is important. For example, when a woman is expecting a baby, she is often given a baby shower. The system of this invention can be particularly useful in avoiding the duplication of gifts for the expectant mother, and for the delivery of merchandise over a specified time before and after the baby arrives. The system can also be expanded to specify specific baby items after the delivery, but is particularly well adapted to deliver flowers and other perishable goods so that they are not all provided at